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FEMA

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Disaster News

FEDERAL AND STATE OFFICIALS REMIND FARMERS AND RANCHERS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TO APPLY FOR EMERGENCY LOAN ASSISTANCE

Applications now being accepted

PASADENA, Calif. — Farmers, growers and ranchers who have suffered damages or loss of livestock structures, such as fences and barns, livestock, poultry, nursery stock, orchards and fields are encouraged to apply for funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Crop Disaster Program (CDP) and utilize state assistance for victims of natural disasters.

Although it's still too early to know the full extent of the loss and injury from the wildfires, state and federal officials are anticipating widespread wind, heat and fire damage to nursery, grove and field crops including avocados, oranges, lemons, evergreen trees, wine grapes, pumpkins, strawberries and potted plants.

Farmers and growers who suffered quantity losses to their crops in recent years can now enroll in the Crop Disaster Program 2005-2007 at local Farm Service Agency (FSA) service centers.

Subject to final rules for the program, CDP provides benefits to farmers who suffered losses to the 2005-2007 crops from natural disasters like the Southern California wildfires.

Producers must have suffered quantity losses in excess of 35 percent to be eligible for CDP. The payment rate is set at 42 percent of the established price. Assistance, together with any crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program payment received for the same crop and including the value of the crop production not lost, must not exceed 95 percent of the total value of the crop absent the disaster.

FSA offices may accept information from producers about quality losses when producers submit applications for quantity losses. However, FSA will only consider quality loss applications complete after FSA announces the quality loss sign-up date. FSA will not consider applications completed for any loss, including quantity losses, until a final rule has been issued for this program.

John Smythe, Executive Director of USDA's Farm Service Agency in California confirmed his commitment to working with his state counterparts to bring relief, "As the FSA director in charge of assessing agricultural damage, I will be touring and inspecting the damaged areas and reporting

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back to Washington, D.C., my observations and recommendations for assistance,” said Smythe. “I look forward to working closely with the CDFA staff, the county agricultural commissioners, and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services to coordinate requests for assistance.”

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has been assisting dairy farms within the region to continue milk shipments to processors by coordinating with the California Department of Transportation and the California Highway Patrol to allow trucks through restricted thoroughfares. CDFA and the San Diego emergency operations center have also been facilitating movement of feed trucks through roadblocks for several chicken ranches in that county. CDFA veterinarians remain deployed in Southern California on high alert standby in preparedness for more fires that could result in strong weekend winds.

CDFA secretary A.G. Kawamura echoed that sentiment. “Weather-related catastrophes have been setbacks in the past, but our industry remains strong and resilient. I have confidence that the indomitable spirit of California farmers, growers and ranchers will prevail through this calamity and enable them to reestablish their livelihoods. As people begin to rebuild their lives and businesses after these devastating wildfires, I'm mobilizing CDFA to assist them in any way possible.”

Primary counties affected: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura; contiguous counties: Imperial, Inyo, Kern, and San Luis Obispo, La Paz, and Mohave in Arizona, and Clark County Nevada.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates overall state-agency response to major disasters in support of local government. OES is also responsible for maintaining the State Emergency Plan and coordinating the California's preparedness, mitigation and recovery efforts.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, economic status or retaliation. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should call FEMA toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or contact your State Office of Equal rights. If suspicious of any abuse of FEMA programs, please contact the fraud hotline at 1-800-323-8603.

Temporary housing assistance from FEMA does not require that an applicant file for an SBA loan. However, an applicant must complete an SBA loan application to be eligible for additional assistance under the part of the Other Needs Assistance (ONA) program that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses. There are other ONA grants such as public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses that do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan to be eligible. FEMA will process applications for housing assistance regardless of whether the applicant has applied for an SBA loan, and eligibility determinations for applicants requesting FEMA's temporary housing assistance will not be held up because the applicant has or has not filled out an SBA application.

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